

Numbers on the rise

State inmate backlog building again

EDITORIALS

In the past, the long-ignored problem of state inmates overflowing their welcome in Alabama's county jails led to a lawsuit to require that they be moved into the crowded state prison system faster.

The overcrowding problems in the state system led to the creation of a second parole board to speed up earnings for those eligible for parole and the state paying out-of-pocket for a facility to house some Alabama inmates for a while.

The numbers of state prisoners remaining in county jails longer than the 90-day after sentencing allowed by law has been dropping again. The state's efforts eliminated the backlog for several months. But as of last week there were 102 prisoners in county jails who already should have been taken into state prisons.

While it is not a crisis, the 2,841 inmates in county jails at one point in the past, there is reason to worry that the number is rising again. D. T. Marshall, opposed any agreement that would

allow state inmates until they can be moved into the state prison system. It is tempting to say what took them so long? It would seem renting space for inmates in county jails would have been an idea addressed before sending inmates out of state.

Alabama Sheriff's Association sent a question to the state asking if they were interested in the potential for revenue from inmates in out of state facilities and keep them closer to their families should increase the chance that they will rehabilitate their lives. It is an option the state should explore as it continues to deal with the overcrowding

St. Clair County Sheriff Terry Smith said the counties don't need to house state inmates for less than anyone else. Certainly not the \$1.75 the state pays now.

The state paid for more to house inmates out of state, and county sheriffs are well aware of that, should the state try to negotiate to keep state inmates in county jails longer.

But even at the same price, the state should save some money in travel costs to put inmates in out of state facilities and keep inmates closer to their families should increase the chance that they will rehabilitate their lives. It is an option the state should explore as it continues to deal with the overcrowding